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ABSTRACT

Programs emphasizing the development of interpersonal skills have been incorporated into the formal educational structure at Empire State College, New York; this process is described and explained. Learning occurs in an individualized context which recognizes the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of interpersonal competence. Student goals--ranging from the acquisition of specific behaviors to broad social understandings--are negotiated with the faculty advisor, or mentor. The mentor-student relationship is seen as an instance of interpersonal interaction that can be used to help improve student interpersonal functioning elsewhere. The types of students likely to pursue interpersonal studies are identified, with respect to individual learning needs. The development of the learning contract, types of experiential and academic learning activities, strategies for evaluating progress, and desired contract outcomes are outlined. Comments on the improvement and expansion of interpersonal studies programs emphasize: (1) increasing sensitivity to interpersonal learning opportunities, (2) explicitly assessing students' prior learning and (3) broadening the range of interpersonal studies from human service-related fields to management, communication, and social change. Illustrative excerpts from actual performance contracts and evaluations are also included. (Author/MV)

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Institutional Report No. 2
Empire State College
Revised Edition

PROSPECTS AND METHODS FOR INTERPERSONAL STUDIES

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OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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CAEL Institutional Report No. 2

Empire State College

Revised Edition

PROSPECTS AND METHODS FOR INTERPERSONAL STUDIES

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This Institutional Report is one of a series (No. 1 through No. 5) reporting selected special project work carried out during 1974-75. This edition was substantially revised during 1975-76 and replaces an earlier version that bore the same report number.

Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning

January 1977

This revised Institutional Report was prepared at Empire State College by:

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The original version was prepared by Miriam Tatzel and Lois Lamdin, also of the Lower Hudson Regional Learning Center.

The original report grew out of the work of a CAEL Task Force at Empire State College, chaired by Arthur W. Chickering. The members of the Task Force over the past two years included:

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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of interpersonal learning in the formal educative process is described and explained. Learning occurs in an individualized context that can take account of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of interpersonal competence, and student goals range from the acquisition of discrete role behaviors to broad social understandings. The mentor-student relationship is seen as an instance of interpersonal interaction that can be used to help improve student interpersonal functioning elsewhere. Types of students likely to pursue interpersonal studies are identified with respect to life learning needs. The sequential development of the learning contract from exploration to completion, types of experiential and academic learning activities, strategies for evaluating change over time, and contract outcomes are outlined. Interpersonal learning sometimes occurs unexpectedly as students find themselves, while carrying out a set of learning activities, in situations that demand or evoke interpersonal abilities. New directions for improving and expanding interpersonal studies are emphasized with respect to: increasing sensitivity to interpersonal learning opportunities, the desirability of explicitly assessing where students start from, and suggestions for broadening the range of interpersonal studies from human service related fields to management, communication, and social change. Illustrative excerpts from actual contracts and evaluations are presented throughout.

PREFACE

During 1974-1975 and 1975-1976, as part of a nationwide effort sponsored by CAEL (Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning), a group of mentors from various learning centers of Empire State College met, under the direction of Arthur W. Chickering, to consider the development of interpersonal competences at the College.

During the first year, the participants in this Task Force gathered materials relating to the incorporation of interpersonal learning in learning contracts, analyzed the problems attendant upon formalized learning in this area, and discussed practical means of implementing such learning. Two members of the Task Force prepared a report for CAEL based on those activities ("Interpersonal Learning in an Academic Setting: Theory and Practice," Tatzel and Lamdin, 1975).

CAEL, meanwhile, arranged workshops on this and other projects at its Assembly meetings (Spring and Fall 1975 and Spring 1976). Dissemination, feedback, and interaction with CAEL participants and with the Empire State College community led to new ideas, materials, and directions of emphasis that are reflected in this, the revised report. Whereas the first report attempted to organize and communicate some of what had been done at the College in the interpersonal area, the present report includes that information, expands the coverage to incorporate new materials, and in addition, tries to indicate what can be done with respect to methods of working with students, suggestions for improving the assessment of change and growth in interpersonal abilities, and possibilities for expanding the range of disciplines where interpersonal competence might have relevance.

Lois Lamdin, the coauthor of the original report, contributed significantly in forming the structure and setting the tone of the project. The sections here that owe special debt to her are: "Students Involved in Interpersonal Learning," "Learning Activities," and "Serendipitous Interpersonal Learning."

During 1975-1976, other members of the CAEL Task Force at Empire State College undertook new projects which, at the time of this writing, are nearing completion. Their work augments and complements the information here. The projects are:

"Critical Incidents in Mentoring," Rudy Cain

"Handbook of Interpersonal Literacy," Fred Mayo and Robert Morrison

"Interpersonal Attributes for Professional Mobility," Lois Muzio and Myra Fooden

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a common assumption of educators and students that college is a time of significant social growth, that students experience changes that somehow will enable them to deal more effectively with their social environment. Most college catalogs pay at least lip service to such goals. Students will "learn to deal responsibly and effectively with others," "develop a sense of group dynamics," "become effective leaders," etc. However, it is rare for such growth to be addressed directly in either course descriptions or syllabi. Traditionally these noble goals are to be pursued outside the curriculum.

At Empire State College significant attempts are being made to incorporate interpersonal learning into the formal educative process. The College is one of a growing number of new colleges that feature independent study and offer college credit for informal learnings gained through life experiences. Each student's course of study is individually tailored and often incorporates learning opportunities that arise from the student's work or living situation. After five years of exploration and formation, our educational procedures have begun to stabilize, and we have amassed much data on the teaching-learning process in this mode.

Learning at Empire State College is structured via learning contracts. The student develops the contract with a mentor, who is an educational advisor and resource person as well as an accomplished specialist in a given subject area. The contract maps out the educational purposes (general and specific), learning activities, and evaluative methods and criteria that the student commits him- or herself to undertake and fulfill.

In the statement on proficiencies expected for a degree, the College Bulletin (1974-75, p. 9) specifically states that in addition to proficiencies in cognitive, affective, and skill areas, the emerging student should have gained certain interpersonal competences.

> Through education should come increasing self-understanding and and understanding of others, a realistic appraisal of attitudes and motives, strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to respond sympathetically to diverse kinds of people.
>
> Satisfaction in life, whether on the job, with friends or in college, depends heavily on the ability to work effectively with others. Nearly all jobs and social situations, including college, require cooperation with other people and groups.

Nevertheless, prior to our interest in the CAEL project, few among the faculty had deliberately set out to incorporate interpersonal learnings as a routine part of the student program in the same way that they routinely dealt with requisite communication or research skills. From the beginning, however, there have been some faculty members, working out of their perceived sense of individual student needs and/or the inherent logic of the students' degree programs, who have found ways of addressing interpersonal competences through the learning contract.

In the process of examining the contracts and evaluations collected by the original CAEL Task Force at Empire State College, the scope of interpersonal learning and means of incorporating it into the educational process began to come into focus. Although the development up to now has been largely informal, there are some underlying principles that can be detected and that help point the way to a more systematic approach. What has happened can be used in looking

beyond the present toward new possibilities for what can happen--in terms of both methods and range of disciplines where interpersonal learning can be relevant.

The report covers theoretical and practical sides of the interpersonal learning process: what it is, how to do it, who's likely to get involved, and why it's important. It is hoped that this effort can provide a framework and sourcebook for persons who are interested in the deliberate incorporation of interpersonal learning in college study. While it is not the intention of this report to call for the mandated inclusion of interpersonal learning in the college curriculum, we do believe that interpersonal learning can and should take its place among academically respectable fields of study.

II. INTERPERSONAL LEARNING IN AN HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK

The format of the learning contract (see Appendix A), designed as it is to encompass the educational purposes and activities of the individual student, can address learning in an holistic sense. The whole person as learner, the interrelatedness of thought, feeling, and action, and the person as participant in the world can be reflected in learning activities and evaluations thereof.

While the learning contract can address, in combination, thought, feeling, and action—or "cognition, affect, and behavior" to use the psychological rather than the plain English terminology--it need not. Certain contract studies, of their nature, may concentrate heavily on one or another mode. In actuality, it seems that all contracts address the cognitive mode, while the other two appear to be optional or less frequently germane. Experiential activities, therefore, are typically carried out in conjunction with intellectual activities. We will briefly introduce the possibilities of contract learning with respect to the three modes[1] before proceeding to applications to the interpersonal area.

The cognitive mode includes knowledge, reasoning, intellectual skills, information processing.[2] Many learning contract activities are directed exclusively to this mode, even those that are relevant for understanding

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[1] Cognition, affect, and behavior are heuristic as well as traditional categories and seem to correspond well with simple self-perceptions: I am doing something--sitting and writing and drinking coffee (behavior); at the same time I am feeling certain sensations, tensions, motives, and so on (affect); and at the same time I am thinking, planning, remembering (cognition). These dimensions are not strictly speaking separable, if pushed far enough. For one thing, affect and cognition are forms of behavior (e.g., physiological behavior); for another, affect is only "known" insofar as it is manifest in consciousness, and is therefore cognitive. Nonetheless, these categories are eminently useful in discussing the full array of learning possibilities.

interpersonal behavior (e.g., a study of research on group dynamics). For an example of a relatively pure "think" contract, we can refer to a student, whose area of concentration was ethology, and whose contract purposes included "an in-depth exploration of aggressivity in order to gain a greater understanding of this phenomenon and its role in natural selection and evolution;" the learning activities were straightforward and included reading, discussion, and writing.

The affective mode encompasses personal, emotional, and subjective experiencing. It ranges from sensation and perception, through emotion and motivation, to the formation of values. Many approaches to experiential learning and growth have utilized this mode (e.g., psychotherapy, sensitivity training), although experiential learning may encompass more than feeling alone. Chickering (1975) defines experiential learning as occurring "when changes in judgments, feelings, knowledge or skills result for a particular person from living through an event or events in the absence of any intervening medium or influence."

It is not uncommon for learning contracts to combine intellectual studies with personal experiencing. One example of such an approach comes from a middle-aged student who describes her general purposes as "to obtain a

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[2]The traditional collegiate learning model has been directed almost exclusively at the cognitive mode. The traditional view, with its respect for the intellect, still stands, at Empire State College and elsewhere. What is offered here are means of extending the learning process from the intellectual to the experiential and behavioral domains in order to capture and capitalize on their mutual interdependence. It is not suggested that colleges should require social or personal growth; that might be ethically dubious, as for example, if standards of personal development were imposed. (Of course, traditional requirements of what must be learned and how it will be evaluated are not value-free or beyond ethical probing, either.) The concern here is with how integrated learning experiences may be structured for those students who need or want them.

bachelor's degree with a concentration in psychology." It is her first contract. She adds, "I am returning to college after an absence of many years and I wish to orient myself to being a student again." These two general purposes are brought together in one of the specific purposes of her contract: "I am particularly interested in studying the psychology of the learning process as it pertains to adult learners. I want to relate this material to my own experiences as a student."

The behavioral mode covers overt actions and skills. Some examples are: art, research, writing, crafts, services. Usually, in a contract a cognitive component is combined with behavioral objectives. An example of an action-based activity which is related to theory is provided by a student of behavior modification.

> Using behavior modification theories and techniques, (I will) write a short paper describing how behavior modification affected my behavior as it relates to becoming a more productive and creative person. Baseline data will be collected to note behavior.

Behavior, in an interpersonal sense, is likely to focus on social meaning rather than, say, the psychomotor process. In picking up a cup of tea, the movement of arm muscles and kinesthetic feedback, for example, are of less interpersonal moment than if the cup is used to cover the person's face. Although "behavior" is a broad term, for most learning contract activities it refers to action in the world and increasing one's effectiveness in an environment.

From examining learning contracts, it appears that well-rounded, impressive, and often powerful programs of study frequently address all three levels

simultaneously. A student connects a specific cognitive generalization that comes from reading and thinking, with personal experiences that illustrate and concretize the generalization, and then follows through with the behavioral changes that flow from the cognitive-affective insight.

The following example is excerpted from a mentor's evaluation (see Appendix B) of a student who, in the course of several learning contracts, integrated the following components: skill as an artist, self-discovery, and study of artists and art history.

> P. continued to work actively on his sketching and painting with special excursions not only to remote woodlands, but to museum collections as well. His works continued to demonstrate the elegance of simplicity and to address the mysteries of nature with strength and clarity . . . . he delved into the lives and works of Hopper, Turner, Sargent, Eakins, Homer and Inness and was able again to distinguish several valuable approaches and techniques.
>
> This culminates a period in P.'s life during which he has altered his own life style, has grown much more intensive in his desire to create art forms out of his own dreams and visions and has developed a profound love and respect for nature . . . . He has increased his desire to search for answers through continued study as well as profound involvement in the creative process of painting and sketching.

In integrated learning contracts, the experiential activities (affect and behavior) are connected with intellectual understanding in some manner--be it through integration, application, or illustration.

Interpersonal competence, to turn now to our area of focus, can be seen as a behavioral outcome of the integration of cognitive and affective learning. In addressing all three levels (cognition, affect, and behavior) in learning purposes and activities, there is an underlying assumption of psychological

consistency: one's understanding of a given situation, what one is experiencing while in it, and the actions one takes will together form an interrelated system. It follows that to alter one aspect will result in the others readjusting themselves (i.e., a learning contract that addresses knowledge and affect relative to interpersonal interaction could be expected to facilitate congruent behavior changes).[3]

Interpersonal competence encompasses the following dimensions: (1) correct assessment of what a social situation is about; (2) experiencing one's own goals, attitudes, and ongoing emotional reactions with respect to it; which together should lead to (3) appropriate behaviors. In other words, competence lies in the ability to apply knowledge to achieve goals through behavior.

In surveying what was available in existing Empire State contracts, we cast a wide net and gathered any and all activities that had to do with persons interacting with one another. The attempt was to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Many of these studies we found dealt with gaining greater understanding of self and others; few aimed directly at goals like "getting along better with others" or upgrading interpersonal behavior (although this frequently appeared to be an implicit goal). The term interpersonal learning is intended to broadly include interpersonal competence, as well as other learnings that have bearing on interpersonal relationships.

The range of interpersonal learnings that can be (and many have been) addressed in learning contracts covers a diversity of roles and settings. Some examples are: interviewing, selling, managing, instructing, counseling, family

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[3]The consistency position is well-entrenched in social psychology; see for example, Abelson et al. (Eds.), 1968, and Feldman (Ed.), 1966.

relationships, talking to children. Professional competences, personal relationships, and communication skills all fit under the "interpersonal" umbrella and may be explored through experiential learning activities.

Experiential learning or "learning from experience" can be taken in two senses. It may mean that people learn how to do something real and practical in the world, that they become more skilled. It may also mean that people learn something <u>from</u> their experiences about the human condition and how the world operates. That is, experiential learning can be both of an applied and of a theoretical nature. For example, one's job provides the opportunity to learn how to carry it out effectively, and it also provides an opportunity to learn something (however circumscribed) about the world of work. One can learn about the general through the personal. With respect to interpersonal competences, a person may learn particular skills, how to act and respond in a given interpersonal situation. Also, a person may learn <u>about</u> a particular social setting and gain perspective on the nature of that type of environment which extends beyond his or her specific role and eventuates in improved functioning as a result of generalization and understanding what the interaction is about. In other words, by acquiring role-specific behaviors and/or by grasping the social context, interpersonal competence is advanced. Learning contracts at Empire State do, and probably should, reflect both types of learning.

The study of role behavior seems especially apt in work on career exploration and professional advancement. The decision to begin a career probably entails images of the professional role--behaviors and attitudes, interpersonal styles, and personal characteristics. The process of gaining professional status is likely to involve interpersonal learning around such

topics as: coming to realistic appraisals concerning the behaviors and attitudes called for in different career roles; assessing one's own abilities and interests; and, finally, acquiring the specific role behaviors.

One example of a contract dealing with professional role development comes from a student who examined the field of pre-retirement counseling as a possible career choice. He wished to assess his own skills relative to professional requirements. From the contract:

> I will prepare a written list of personal skills required to successfully administer a pre-retirement counseling program. I will evaluate in writing my personal skills inventory relative to the aforementioned written list.

From the mentor's evaluation:

> The student's list of personal skills . . . . was considered very thorough. Twenty-three major categories of knowledge and personal skills were noted. The student then rated his own personal skills inventory against the master list. In the mentor's opinion, the ratings were fairly stated and reflect both his proven experiential abilities and the skill areas where added learnings must take place.

Many contracts, perhaps the majority, emphasize general social abilities, such as being able to comprehend the dynamics in a social setting. Effective action is seen as an outcome of accurate perception. Along these lines, Argyris and Schön (1974) have recently proposed a model of interpersonal competence that combines individual effectiveness with social health. They place great emphasis on the importance of acquiring valid information. The ability to secure knowledge about a situation and one's behavior in it, and to perceive what the others involved are experiencing, is enhanced when there is mutual trust and openness. (Contrariwise, interpersonal mistrust reduces the likelihood of giving and receiving valid information.)

An example that may be applied here that touches upon the issues of information and trust concerns a student who, as part of an effort to rehabilitate prisoners, undertakes to relieve the boredom of the men in the county jail. He brings in films, books, and so on, and he is, as his mentor puts it, "baffled by the failure of the prisoners to respond."
From the mentor's evaluation:

> Empathy, the capacity to find in oneself and in others the same basic problems of human existence and of human understanding, became the principal vehicle of learning, of learning about the differences in guards ranging from gentleness and compassion to outright sadism and of learning about criminals.

The growth in the student's understanding of these people and their situation did apparently eventuate in greater effectiveness. An evaluation from a prisoner:

> I just can't imagine how time would have dragged if it wasn't for you that we could look forward to your coming again. You have no idea what a change you've made in this place since you've been here.

From the undersheriff: "He has contributed in many ways in relieving the tension that men feel when confined." From the sheriff: "I can't say enough for all the help this program has accomplished to build morale among the inmate population."

Valid information may also be gained through careful and insightful observation. Here one may think of the abilities of a social scientist who has read about, pondered, and observed social behavior and has keen awareness of the dynamics of human relations and the forces of social conventions. An example of the acquisition of participant observation skills is provided by a student who

did research on the American youth scene in Europe. One of his learning activities was to "compile a series of notes and reflections . . . (that) together with the hard data collected will form the foundation of a research report to be presented at the end of his travels."

From the mentor's evaluation:

> Functioning with the method of participation observation and the verstehen approach to interpersonal communication, he involved himself in numerous "youth scenes" and, as he indicates, "saw thousands of youths and adults." The student, reflecting on his learning in comparison with his preconceptions, says: "I am now astonished that I/we could have been so naive."

Because interpersonal contexts include self as well as others, the intrapersonal dimension figures dynamically in interactions, and intrapersonal learning can complement interpersonal learning. Interpersonal behaviors arise, in part, from "internal" affective states--the person's motives, values, and ongoing emotional reactions (such as anger, admiration, anxiety, liking). In several contracts, the "interpersonal" goal was affective, such as to become more comfortable in difficult or touchy situations. One was from a nurse whose purposes were to "become aware of the behavioral and psychological changes that occur when a person and his family face death" and to "search my own feelings about death in order to feel more comfortable in situations involving death." She attended a course and did reading on death and dying, and she analyzed two situations with dying people. According to the mentor, these analyses "showed excellent ability to apply theory to the situations, but limited ability to interpret her own behavioral responses or to suggest more effective behaviors."

Another student, doing a contract in the area of human sexuality and sex education, stated as one of her goals related to her work situation: "To become

more comfortable in dealing with my feelings regarding sexual behavior of a group of emotionally disturbed adolescent boys." She compiled "process recordings on incidents involving sexual behavior that occur in my daily encounters with adolescents who are emotionally disturbed." These were to be evaluated by the mentor "for the ability to analyze incidents by identifying possible motivational factors, and describing the interpersonal dynamics. Also, the ability to assess the affective components of the situation in herself as well as others will be evaluated.

A final interpersonal area to be considered here concerns the goal of enjoying friendly and productive relations with others. Some overall purposes might be: Improving human relations, increasing the capacity of the social environment to elicit cooperative and competent behavior, and satisfying personal needs within a social system. A contract that speaks directly to understanding and improving relationships with others is provided by a student who undertook an in-depth study of the works of Carl Rogers; one of her learning activities was to "use Rogerian principles in order to understand and possibly improve the interpersonal functioning within my own family." The mentor's evaluation acknowledges some of the student's learnings:

> The set of Family Observations successfully illustrates how her understanding of Rogers influenced her reactions to events involving her family . . . . In them, she describes her growing ability to empathize with others even when she disagrees with them; her willingness to trust her children to take care of themselves when she goes on vacation; her recognition of when her daughter acts in congruence with her (daughter's) feelings; and her realization of when she herself tries to stifle her daughter's feelings.

Interpersonal competence has been examined with respect to cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. A distinction was drawn between the goals of learning role specific behaviors and of gaining social psychological understandings. Several dimensions of competence that are likely to apply broadly in interpersonal relationships were presented and were illustrated with examples drawn from various types of roles and spheres of activity (namely, role development, valid information, affect, and positive relationships).

III. THE MENTOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

The mentor-student relationship forms the crucible of the learning process at Empire State College. It is fundamentally a "helping relationship," which Carl Rogers (1968) defines as "one in which one of the participants intends that there should come about, in one or both parties, more appreciation of, more expression of, more functional use of the latent inner resources of the individual" (p. 688). Here we will examine how this interpersonal relationship can help students to use other interpersonal settings for learning.

Anyone who becomes a mentor must at least be willing to work and interact with others on a one-to-one basis; in actual fact, the nature of the job attracts many individuals who prefer to work this way. The mentor-student relationship is of interest here for two reasons: it is the educational delivery system and it provides a ready example of what we are studying, namely interpersonal competence. In terms of roles, the relationship is strictly speaking hierarchical, with the mentor as the official authority or expert and the student as both client and charge; in practice, the relationship often seems more one of colleagues engaged in a joint task.

How far students can go in clarifying their educational goals and means and in actually learning, depends more or less on the sensitivity, skill, and creativity of the mentor. To the extent that mentors are cognizant of their own interpersonal styles and abilities, they will better understand what their students are dealing with out there in their lives, and what their learning needs are in this area.

The student, too, needs interpersonal skills in order to derive the most out of working with the mentor: these include being able to use the mentor for

guidance, being able to contact and set up appointments with the mentor, and being able to communicate educational needs, react to suggestions, etc.

Of course, mentors develop their own individual styles in working with students, and also flexibly adjust their approach in response to different student learning styles. It would be a vast project, indeed, to try to map out all combinations of mentoring and learning styles.[4] Structured-unstructured, analytic-holistic, objective-subjective suggest some of the continua that would apply. One mentoring-style dimension that emerged in the Task Force discussions concerned the issue of how far the mentor should go in challenging the student. The following is a summary of a discussion among mentors that illustrates differences, especially along the comfort-confrontation dimension.

A: We must notice that the student needs to feel comfortable with what he is doing and studying; it is a prelude to his development of self-confidence.

B: In the case I presented, the student and I started with an area that was least anxiety-producing . . . what the student could feel most comfortable with.

C: I do not teach like this. To me, chaos is vital for creativity.

D: So, you try to scare them?

C: Knowledge <u>is</u> a fearful thing. Sometimes, I want to scare the pants off them!

E: If I may summarize: the challenge offered should not be too great. C. suggested that some students must be <u>confronted</u>.

C: Not some, <u>all</u> students.

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[4]There is, however, some movement recently in this direction. Cross (1976) looks at the educational implications of research on cognitive styles, and Chickering (1976) explores the relationship between adult developmental stages and learning styles.

D: We all seem to agree on confrontation of one degree or another. It all depends on how, when, and whence. We all make evaluations of "where students are" and try to move them in different ways . . . .

At times, conflict, disagreement, and tension may arise between mentor and student. Perhaps the student has not adequately fulfilled the contract; perhaps the mentor has not evaluated the student's work fairly. Whatever the reason, confronting the student, being confronted by the student, working through tensions, all require much sensitivity, skill, and honesty if such moments are to be turned to educational advantage.

The following remarks are excerpted from a mentor's account of how he worked with, confronted, and guided the learning of a young man who wanted to become a counselor.

> After a few meetings, I began to challenge, directly, his statements of self-awareness since it was becoming obvious to me that it was not true that he was in touch with himself deeply enough (as he had claimed).
>
> I suggested that R. write a number of case reviews of various people that he had been informally trying to counsel about various problems. This apparently helped him to see what he was doing more objectively . . . .
>
> I have always been very frank, even blunt with R. after our first few meetings, and have always said what was on my mind. We respect each other, and this, to me, is the basis of our working together.

The mentor-student relationship is one that endures for months or even several years, and it offers an opportunity for fostering growth that is rare in course-classroom modes of instruction. Many mentors show a remarkable ability to follow a student through a sequence of development that in retrospect turns out to be an organic whole that neither foresaw in the beginning. One such sensitive mentor worked with a student on a series of contracts which lasted a

year-and-a-half. The interpersonal competences involved have to do with the student's abilities to work in the arts with elderly people in an institutional setting.

Contract #1: This was essentially an exploration of self on both an intrapersonal as well as interpersonal orientation. B.'s mode of expression was her journal and autobiography. This process helped to put her more in touch with her own feelings and inclinations and motivated her to explore professional directions which used both her talents and love as a painter and her interest in people.

Contract #2: This contract became B.'s initiation and significant movement into a variety of potential professional contexts to help her to explore and clarify her interests: services which used art, recreational, and occupational therapy. She selected a particular service, an area nursing home, and went through a complex laborious rite of entry. She evaluated existing art and recreation programs, then learned how to work in creative expressive mediums with a variety of clients: physically ill, elderly senile and nonsenile, and mentally retarded. She developed techniques and individuated programs. Her readings expanded to medical and therapeutic care in geriatrics, social policy service models, and sociologic/anthropologic literature.

Contract #3: B. undertook a major sociologic, social policy project: devising a social-history interview and carrying this out on over 200 residents of the nursing home. She involved staff and residents and began implementation of her findings with staff in terms of program development.

She continued her own creative art work, and developed a variety of creative art techniques for the many interests and needs of the residents. She looked at the distinction between art as painting and art as hobby or therapeutic recreation.

Her readings included sociologic-ethnic studies, oral history and sociologic technique as well as creative art and professional art-therapy literature.

Contract #4: B. did an intensive five-month internship with a creative arts therapist in a community day-based mental health center. Here, B. took an ongoing seminar combining theory and practice in creative expression with people having emotional problems. She also learned about various theories of Humanistic therapies with individuals and groups. She co-led a creative arts workshop in the second half of her contract with the therapist-leader.

She also learned about art-therapy as a psycho-therapeutic tool through reading and group and case conferences at the Mental Health Center.

B. also continued her work with elderly people at the nursing home in creative-expression activities, as well as setting up client advocacy and resident programming addressing the many needs of whole people: social, educational, aesthetic, and experiences/relationships outside the home as well as within it.

Turning now to another example, a mentor describes how she guided the learning of a student whose field was nursing education.

A. came with a definite plan for her work at the College. She wanted to begin by learning how to write behavioral objectives and then proceed in curriculum development with a project culminating with the development of a new manual for practical nursing students. She appeared rather narrow in her approach to learning and I felt it was my responsibility to introduce her to different approaches without negating her own ideas. That was the unwritten objective in the first contract.

This student's third contract was in the area of group dynamics; it is of interest not only because of its interpersonal subject matter, but also because it shows how a tutor-student relationship can supplement the work with the mentor. From the evaluation by the tutor:

A. was involved in her contract on group dynamics over a four-month period. The first two months of her work were fraught with doubts and rationalization. The last two months of her work were exceptionally productive. During these last two months, she analyzed a classroom group with which she had worked as a teacher and made appropriate changes in her own behavior, gained insights into the dynamics of a faculty committee of which she is a member, and articulated a desire to participate in some informal social groups for her own personal growth.

In her relationship with the tutor, the student at first "found difficulty in comprehending my tutor and I was in a phase of extreme frustration." As the work

progressed and the student gained more firsthand experience with groups, she noted that: "My enthusiasm for what I was learning increased 100 fold. The climax of the contract came when I felt I could relate or interact with my tutor. I was making sense and was able to understand her." Of her learnings, she says: "An abundant understanding of self. Not only identification of my behavior, when in a group, but how this behavior varies depending on my role or position within the group."

In most cases, the mentor does not have firsthand knowledge of the student's work in the field and interpersonal behavior there (although the mentor is likely to have some knowledge of the student's interactive style from their meetings). Events and observations are reported back to the mentor through discussion and written accounts. If there is an outside supervisor, that person is often in a better position to have direct influence on what the student does in the field than the mentor does. The mentor serves as a sounding-board, somewhat removed from the scene of action, who can help the student reflect upon and develop his/her own goals and roles.

The mentor-student relationship, itself founded on the process of interaction, can provide a positive, task-oriented person-resource for the student to turn to in learning to function more effectively in other, perhaps less "helping," interpersonal environments. Moreover, if we follow Carl Rogers' thinking, learning itself is more likely to flourish when there is mutual appreciation and respect between mentor and student.

IV. STUDENTS INVOLVED IN INTERPERSONAL LEARNING

The range of students, in terms of age, educational background, and socioeconomic situation, is extraordinarily broad at Empire State College. The average age is 35 but it ranges from below 20 to well over 50, and the male-female ratio is 53 to 47 percent (Seeking Alternatives IV, 1975). Much research has been done on the stages of adult development (e.g., Neugarten, 1964; Loevinger, 1970; Chickering, 1976), and it is tempting to try to match the goals and learning activities of our students with those stages. There is not enough information to do this in a detailed systematic fashion, but we can make some limited generalizations about those students at ESC who seem more prone than others to seek learning in interpersonal competences.

If we accept the idea that "some dissatisfaction, discomfort or desire that activates the individual to respond must be present as a basic condition for new learning to occur" (Levine, 1963, p. 446), then it would seem obvious that during those life periods when change is either imminent or present, the individual is most prone to seek new learnings. This sand-in-the-oyster theory implies that "crisis" periods are potentially the most fruitful for the educative process. The same motives (or irritants) that impel a person to seek greater knowledge or to increase his/her competence in skill areas--the desires to grow that lie behind all educative processes--make it not only possible but desirable for one to direct one's energies toward the acquisition of more effective social behaviors. Dissatisfaction with older social relationships, strivings for newer, more productive relationships, changes in the way one views one's position both inside and outside of the family structure--all these grow out of life crisis

situations and create the climate in which formal learning in interpersonal fuctioning can occur.

The mere act of enrollment is highly significant at Empire State College. The ESC student does not usually make the decision to attend college in the same automatic way that the high school senior sets about in November to apply to a requisite number of colleges. Whereas the high school senior is fulfilling the "normal" expectations of his parents and peers, the potential ESC student is usually doing something that represents a departure from his/her normal life pattern. Thus, the act of enrollment takes on a significance beyond that of the mere transition from one stage of education to another. These students are usually coming not from other institutions of learning but from the home or work situation, and the decision to become a full- or half-time student involves a major rearrangement of priorities and, indeed, sometimes of actual living arrangements.

Of course not all students are eager to work on their interpersonal competences. The nature of their academic or career orientations, as well as their individual predilections, helps to determine their willingness to work in the realm of interpersonal relationships. If a person is working in a fact- or skill-oriented discipline where relationships with numerical or data units or with motor or other skills are uppermost, it simply may not occur to him or her to seek learnings that address relationships with people.

The following categories, while they do not exhaustively describe all students engaged in interpersonal studies, do highlight some identifiable groupings:

- Young students, recently out of high school or, perhaps, recently dropped out of another college.
- Persons in a mid-life crisis or transition situation, frequently housewives or those changing careers.
- Professionals and would-be professionals in people-oriented fields.

Young students, those in their early twenties, do not constitute a very large segment of the ESC population. (Indeed, some of the faculty feel that the student coming directly from high school is to be discouraged because he/she may not have developed the skills necessary for independent study.) But among the young students who do enroll in the College are many who march to a distinctly different drummer; frequently their decision to enroll in an innovative institution has been part of a self-exploratory effort to define themselves. They are prone to continue this exploration in learning activities that help them to relate to peers, authority figures, the world of work, and family. Being introspective and self-reflective, they frequently wish to translate their inner "journey" into learning activities that actually involve travel, learning to get along with diverse peoples, entering into new relationships with the adult world.

Another type of student predisposed to do work in interpersonal competence is the woman who in mid-life finds herself in a change situation of one kind or another. Frequently the change is fairly benign, part of the life cycle: the children are all in school and the woman finds herself for the first time in years free to indulge her intellectual predilections or to seek interests beyond Cub Scouts and kitchen. But not infrequently the change implies a crisis: divorce, separation, widowhood, the loss of the husband's job, each with the

concomitant realization that the woman must redefine her life role and come to terms with a new image of herself as a working adult. These women, highly motivated, mature, and self-disciplined, frequently seek assurance that they can function outside the home. Often unaware of the interpersonal competences that have made them successful wives and mothers, they seek studies that will lead to competences that will enable them to make their way in the various new relationships necessary to functioning in businesses, social agencies, political organizations, etc.

Men, too, are likely to undergo shifts in self-image and career goals in mid-life. Especially when their new directions are more people-oriented than before in terms of work interests and relationships with colleagues and family, they may be prone to seek interpersonal learnings.

Those who are already in a professional field in which interpersonal skills are an essential ingredient for effective functioning, as well as those who plan to enter one, may consciously seek to further their interpersonal competences. Teachers, social workers, therapists, health care personnel, all may find that interpersonal studies are appropriate for their career enhancement. Many are already paraprofessionals who carry out responsibilities that usually go along with more advanced formal training than they have had. Because these students are often employed, their work settings can be used as bases for developing professional competences. More traditional, frequently, than the younger students, they may at first be unaware that such studies are possible in a college.

This, of course, does not describe the entire population of students doing work in interpersonal competences though it does identify some prevalent

clusters.[5] Sometimes mentors are surprised to find that students who have seemed totally task-oriented along traditional lines will suddenly demand the kinds of activities we are discussing.

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[5] Many students come to college either while in therapy or just out of it. Intensely aware of their intrapersonal conflicts and resolutions, they carry this awareness and sensitivity to their relationships with others. Already quite empathetic, they seek to further their sensitivities in some formalized way through study.

V. MAKING IT HAPPEN--METHODS FOR FURTHERING INTERPERSONAL LEARNING

Students at Empire State may make use of the learning contract in order to structure activities around interpersonal goals. This section provides examples of procedures and content areas that show what can be done and also point to other possibilities beyond those specifically mentioned. Those who wish to engage in such work may be able to use the patterns outlined here to construct their own courses of study, accommodating their specific purposes, chosen activities, and means of evaluation. Persons from institutions that do not use learning contracts may nevertheless find that the learning components described here--readings, activities, and projects on interpersonal learning--have relevance for them and may be worked into their particular frameworks.

Students come to their mentors with a wide variety of questions and situations that have potential to lead to formal work in interpersonal learning. Some examples would be:

> I'm a manager and I want to make better use of the people I supervise in reaching decisions that affect their working conditions.
>
> I'm a nurse-counselor and I frequently feel like I "don't know what I'm doing" when I lead group counseling sessions.
>
> I've just started to pay attention to how people communicate, verbally and non-verbally.
>
> I want to understand adolescent psychology. My children are in their teens and they can be difficult to live with at times.

Some of the academic and personal goals that go along with interpersonal learning can include: understanding social behavior, testing social theories against observational data, improving social environments, increasing professional status, self-improvement.

Work situations, notably in the human services, education, and business, seem especially fertile for generating interest and opportunity in developing interpersonal skills. In other cases, students may seek out such environments through field placements, often as part of their professional training. Other times the learning is outside any immediate work concern but is part of a general educational interest in learning about and improving interpersonal interactions. Still again, a personal or family crisis may trigger a desire to work in this area. Whatever the reason and whatever the area of focus, the educational process may be quite similar. What follows can be considered a rather typical sequence of events. There are, of course, variations and exceptions.

Exploratory Period

This is a time of clarifying purposes, gathering materials and ideas, and trying out learning activities and procedures.

Beginning with a preliminary statement of purposes, the student is encouraged to read and reflect on one or several areas that seem appropriate, and to note and pay attention to his/her reactions, critiques, ideas, and aha's that the reading stimulates. By thus responding to the literature, the student can begin to track down issues and thinkers that are meaningful and help articulate a direction of inquiry. At the same time, an interpersonal arena is identified in which the student will observe and act and start to experiment with means of keeping records, such as tape recordings, a log or journal, critical incidents, or process recordings.

Learning Activities

In the original sample of contracts gathered by the CAEL Task Force (a total of 25), reading and writing as learning activities were universally represented along with experiential activities. Most contracts included sizable bibliographies. Readings in the fields of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and literature attest to the assumption that to apprehend a theory about human behavior is to be better equipped to function using that theory as a behavioral model.

Writing activities fell into two major categories: (1) formal writing, research papers, and essays (14 of the group of 25 contracts), and (2) informal writing, journals, diaries, and logs (11). The formal writing has a double thrust: it puts the student into a situation in which he or she must synthesize reading and experience, and it also gives the mentor a product which may be evaluated. The journals, diaries, and logs foster introspection and encourage analysis of interpersonal situations and personal reactions to those situations (all of which are tools for assessment and growth). One contract specified that the student write an autobiography as a means of initiating introspection about the nature of his relationships with family, friends, authority figures, etc. Encouraging the student to take a journey into his or her own past in this fashion seems potentially valuable in that it may point out to both student and mentor areas of need in interpersonal functioning that may be useful in the formation of future learning activities.

Twelve of the contracts in that sample revolved around an actual participatory experience in which the student engaged actively in a group or one-to-one encounter. Such activities as interviewing, teaching, leading groups,

contacting and influencing individuals and groups, counseling, etc. gave students the opportunity to combine theory and practice. Most of these activities took place in an already existing work situation, but some mentors and students devised new situations specifically for the purpose of the learning contract. Such settings as prisons, ecology groups, resettlement camps, workshops, art therapy sessions, on a paid or volunteer basis, were fruitful loci for the attainment of interpersonal skills.

Seven of the contracts studied included some form of observation in which the student watched the interplay of relationships, whether of informal family groups, therapy groups, or individuals in institutions (schools, hospitals, nursing homes), usually keeping notes which could later be discussed with the mentor. Frequently such observations were explicitly tied with the requirement that the student attempt to generalize about interpersonal dynamics on the basis of his/her findings. Moreover, some of the observation modes merged into participation as the student became more comfortable in the situation.

Closely allied with the participation/observation modes was role playing. In a few contracts, students were encouraged to assume, imaginatively or in a manufactured situation, the roles of people either antithetical to them or in some dyadic relationship with them. Such role playing would hopefully enable the student to break out of his/her own shell of conscious and unconscious assumptions about the nature of social reality and begin to see interpersonal relationships from another point of view.

Formal coursework was the mode in five contracts. Students enrolled in classes, residencies, seminars in areas directly relevant to their work in interpersonal competences. Other modes included travel, process recording,

case histories, and pure introspection. All in all, there proved to be an impressive variety of ways in which the student pursued learning in the interpersonal area.

Almost all of the contracts combined a number of learning modes. For example, the woman described earlier who wished to become more comfortable with adolescent sexuality wrote a contract which included the following impressive array of activities:

- compiling an extensive bibliography on sexual development
- writing critical comparisons of another group of assigned books
- writing a formal essay relating childhood experience and later sexual behavior
- working in an institutional setting with a group of disturbed adolescents
- doing process recordings on incidents involving sexual behavior among these adolescents
- comparing the disturbed adolescents' behavior with "normal" adolescent behavior
- assessing the affective components in the situation in herself as well as in others
- making recommendations as to how sex education might be accomplished with emotionally disturbed children
- describing interrelationships between sexual behavior and culture

Initial Abilities and Growth

Certainly the goals of changing, becoming more effective, and so on, are clearly present in many contracts dealing with interpersonal competences. Rarely, however, is there an explicit attempt to assess where the student is

starting from or to compare the level of functioning/understanding at the end of the contract with the "before" state.[6] There may be many reasons for this. Perhaps the starting point is simply "obvious"; or the goal is to achieve a certain level of functioning rather than to assess change; or again, the mentor and student may believe that the effort would be too great, and the probability of measuring competence in any neat and meaningful way, either before or after the learning experience, too slim. Nor should one overlook the fact that sometimes the changes that occur are wholly unexpected, making "before" measures a moot point except in retrospect. To give an example, as a result of studying psychoanalytic theory, a student was able to participate more effectively in staff meetings at the mental health center where she worked, and she thereby upgraded her professional status and recognition. She and her co-workers noted the changes, but professional credibility was not identified as a "problem" and perhaps only emerged as one after the "solution" was found.

Nonetheless, taking stock of where a student starts from at the outset seems desirable on several grounds. First, it can be a reflective exercise for the student that may lead to enhanced self-awareness and help in clarifying needs and in forming distinct learning objectives. Second, by focusing on "value added" (the change that has occurred) as well as "achieved status" (the final or overall level of functioning) it becomes possible to assess the impact and effectiveness of the learning experience. And third, the attempt to

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[6] In addition to the original set of contracts and a number of others shared with the author by individual mentors, Dr. Robert Morrison made available a compilation of more than 100 contracts and evaluations from the Northeast Learning Center. His analyses of interpersonal learning contracts will be reported in Mayo and Morrison, 1976. The observations here address the whole range of of contracts surveyed.

evaluate change without a pre-measure leaves one open to the vagaries of memory and overall impressions in trying to reconstruct the starting point.

Not only is it a good idea to get "before" measures, but it seems desirable to monitor changes and developments as the contract progresses. Certainly this process already occurs in the meetings between mentors and students; but it may be possible to go about it more systematically once dimensions and goals have been identified that can serve as reference points for examining ongoing experiences.

In all, it seems worth attempting, however crudely, to move toward precision in assessing interpersonal competence. An obvious place to begin is with students' self-assessments. Self-ratings and personal statements, while they are prone to the biases and limitations of subjectivity and may not correspond to the ratings of more disinterested outsiders, do have the advantage of being rooted in the person's own world view and can provide a tangible basis upon which to proceed. And of course, observations by others (e.g., field supervisor, mentor) concerning dimensions of interpersonal interaction such as assertion, cooperation, or whatever, can also be obtained.

One may begin by devising homemade instruments, perhaps relying on existing scales or strategies to some degree. Possibilities include checklists and inventories (Muzio and Fooden [1976], for example, are preparing an inventory of interpersonal competences for the helping professions); Q-sorts (Rogers and Dymond, 1954); or the semantic differential format (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957). Or the starting point may be frankly autobiographical, an assessment of the form, "This is who I am, and here's what I want to work on."

A means for observing and noting changes over time can be obtained by sampling interactions during the course of the contract and analyzing them with respect to relevant categories. For example, Argyris (1968) identifies "directly verifiable information" and "minimally evaluative feedback" as characteristics of helpful communication. A student who is a "helper" in a counseling or teaching situation might sample a series of episodes, record them on tape or write them down soon after the interaction, and then observe instances and changes along these dimensions of behavior. Here the method is primarily content analysis. Behaviors are identified and principles are applied in interpreting them. The specific "principles" will vary somewhat depending on the interpersonal arena (human services, business, personal relationships), the interpersonal focus (helping, supervising, parenting) and the level of comprehension (the role behavior and/or the social context). An example of this approach can be gleaned in the following excerpt from the contract of a nurse working in a mental health setting.

> Ms. H. leads a group of recovered alcoholics, meeting weekly for an hour and a half. On a weekly or bi-weekly basis (over the course of six months) she will write out a verbatim account of a five- to ten-minute interaction sequence. She will then analyze these segments with respect to principles, methods, and ideas she has found in the reading or has as goals for herself. Examples of points to look for in her role as leader may include: empathy, identifying feelings vs. intellectualizations, pacing (not rushing ahead of the client) and the importance of increasing clarity. In the course of her work she will be defining her role as leader. The process recordings and analyses of them will be shared with the mentor during periodic meetings.

Self-ratings and process analyses are two types of strategies mentors and students can use in order to enhance their attention to before-after changes

and monitor growth. A third method worth mentioning here is simulation, in which students respond to hypothetical, contrived, or staged interactions in order to elicit and observe their interpersonal styles. This seems to be a potentially fruitful approach worthy of deliberate exploration.

Forming the Contract

The student's explorations have eventuated in clarity about how to direct the contract and what needs to be done. The bibliography is assembled. The student knows what to look for in interactions and what to aim for. In conjunction with readings and discussions with the mentor, the student has found themes and principles to guide the analysis and evaluation of interactions.

At this point, the contract will be formally drawn up, perhaps at the second or third meeting. Because the student is already at work, the beginning date will usually be fixed at around the time of the first meeting or whenever the student actually began the contract work. (If the student had done sufficient exploration prior to the first meeting, the contract may have been drawn up then.) Goals are articulated as are learning activities including reading, field experience, record keeping, papers, and often the issues to be addressed in written work or through dialogue. The degree of specificity varies, but usually a balance is struck that makes expectations explicit yet allows for some flexibility or choice. If there is a field supervisor, as indeed there might be if the student is working in an institution, that person's role and evaluative responsibilities are written into the contract too.

The amount of credit agreed upon determines the length of the contract. Roughly speaking, the extent and level of work expected for a typical

three-credit college course would be worth three weeks of Empire State credit and a full-time student would have three weeks in which to accomplish it; a half-time student would have six weeks to carry out the same project and would receive the same three weeks of credit. As an example, the credit for a contract that involved a study of group dynamics plus field experience might be calculated on the basis of three weeks for the equivalent of a group dynamics course and two weeks for a practicum in group dynamics, for a total of five weeks credit. Traditional course analogues aside, the ambitiousness, scope, and depth of the project as well as its appropriateness in the context of the student's total course of study are taken into account in affixing credit.

Setting Up the Evaluation

Each contract specifies the methods and criteria by which the student's learnings and products will be evaluated. The evaluation is thus arranged for well in advance of the end of the contract, and the participants--student, mentor, and other evaluators, if any--all know what their roles are and what to look for.

The evaluative criteria indicate the types of abilities that the student's work should demonstrate and that the student agrees to achieve. The single most significant and characteristic criterion for contracts on interpersonal learning (or indeed any experiential learning) is the ability to integrate academic and experiential study. Certainly an educational strength of such contracts is that experience and formal study can reinforce each other and provide mutual validation.

By way of illustration, the following criteria come from the contract of a nurse (now working towards a bachelor's degree in psychology) who is beginning

to function as a behavior therapist in the mental health complex where she works. A psychiatrist there has agreed to serve as a tutor for her studies in learning theory and behavior modification and to supervise her work with clients. He will evaluate her learning on the basis of their discussions, case analyses, and a substantial final paper. Note that there are a range of criteria in which one dealing with integration (criterion "c") is embedded:

a. knowledge of terminology, theory, and research in learning psychology and behavior therapy

b. comparisons of methods and viewpoints

c. ability to apply principles to ongoing therapeutic situations and evaluate the process

d. competence as a behavior clinician (enlargement of skills and increase in proficiency).

Another student, learning to lead groups at a community workshop, kept a log which summarized group process and his reactions; he read in the areas of humanistic psychology and group dynamics; and he wrote a paper to synthesize his learnings. The evaluative criteria included "comprehension of the theoretical approaches I have read about, my ability to integrate my intellectual knowledge with my personal awareness, and my ability to apply my understanding in leading groups."

The overall process which is captured by such evaluative criteria can properly be called "insightful." Theory helps articulate, order, and explicate experience; and experience helps illustrate, actualize, and evaluate theory.

Some methods for recording and observing changes in interpersonal competence were outlined above in "Initial Abilities and Growth." They represented beginning

approaches to measurement, by which levels of interpersonal functioning and increases in proficiency could be ascertained. This is measurement in a rough ordinal sense ("more than," "less than"). There seems little prospect for actually quantifying interpersonal competence at this time. Given the relatively new and experimental nature of interpersonal learning contracts and the often complex and holistic nature of life learning situations, attempts at precise quantification seem premature and unpromising.[7]

One sound strategy mentors have evolved in order to increase confidence in the validity and objectivity of evaluations is to use several different evaluation methods that converge on a given sphere of activity. In this way, the limitations of any one method (e.g., self-evaluations, supervisors' judgments, or mentors' inferences from logs) can be mitigated by using several methods that compensate for each other's shortcomings. When all methods point to the same conclusion, belief in its correctness is strengthened.

An example of a convergent approach to evaluation can be seen in the case described above (p. 12) of the nurse who wanted to become more comfortable with death and dying. The contract was not completed, but the mentor wrote a "case study" evaluation of the student's progress:

> In regard to how well this student has met her affective goal, I would say that although her efforts with patients represented

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[7] There are also sentiments that render scales and numerical measurement unpopular. There is concern that measuring students' interpersonal competences along scales devised by others and reflecting external values would violate the student-centered spirit of the College, and could even tend toward a uniform standard of behavior not unlike the "canned" interpersonal competence of telephone operators and airline personnel! Moreover, the institutional policy of narrative evaluations reflects an underlying preference for descriptions of what actually took place rather than abstract symbols.

rudimentary efforts at responding effectively in such situations, she did become more comfortable in situations involving death. This judgment is supported by the following:

1. E. reported that she felt more comfortable.

2. The reporting of the second situation was more complete, contained more of the student's participation, and included more of the patient's significant behavior than the first situation.

3. In our meeting, E. seemed to become more at ease in discussing her progress in studying death and dying. I noticed a distinct decrease in the amount of nervous activity and verbal blocking than had occurred in our earlier meetings. These behaviors did not occur when discussing other aspects of the contract.

The interpersonal learning of the student described above who was a group leader in a community workshop was evaluated in several ways: by the log he kept which included an account of group process as well as his reflections, by the paper he wrote which synthesized his learnings, and by the supervisor's report on his performance and growth. The mentor, supervisor, and student all partook in the evaluative process.

Convergent methods of evaluation and criteria that address the integration of academic and experiential learning are characteristic of contracts in interpersonal learning. When growth in interpersonal competence and insight is sought, it is important that the contract build in procedures for observing and assessing change.

Work-in-Progress

Periodically during the course of the contract the mentor and student meet to discuss the experiential learning activites and the readings. The mentor can

look over logs, outlines for papers, first drafts, brief reaction papers. This is a stage of development and feedback. From an instructional point of view, this phase may be the most significant. It's a time for exchanging ideas and information and for pondering the meaning of happenings out there in the "field."

Because students work largely on their own, and conceivably could start to drift or feel that theirs is a lonely pursuit, contact with the mentor is extremely important. It helps to maintain task-orientation, and it helps students find out how well they are communicating their sequences of thought to another person; the mentor is at once an anchor, keeping the student connected with a purpose and an institution, and an audience, reacting to and guiding the performance. Because meetings may be separated by several weeks or a month, phone calls and memos help maintain contact in between.

Completion

The time comes, on or around the contract's target end date, when all the events and outcomes called for in the contract are fulfilled. The papers, logs, or other materials arrive for the mentor's review. That done, a follow-up meeting is usually arranged during which the mentor shares reactions and raises questions concerning the student's work, and together they reflect upon and evaluate the contract as a whole. Through interaction, the mentor can gain a better understanding of the student's intentions and decisions, why the presentation was handled in a certain way, for example, and the student can find out something about how the mentor regards the contract work, even before the formal evaluation is written up.

The mentor's final responsibility is to prepare, for the student's official record, an account of the contract that digests the purposes, activities, and

evaluative procedures of the contract and presents the evaluation itself (see Appendix B). The acceptability of this document is acknowledged by the student, the mentor, and the dean of the learning center, all of whom sign it.

The evaluation speaks to the quality of the student's performance with respect to the evaluative criteria, and subsumed under the criteria, whether the contract purposes have been achieved and the learning activities fulfilled. In examining actual evaluations, many of which are excerpted throughout this report, those that were most meaningful for the reader tended to be moderately concrete in describing what was learned. They appeared to strike a balance between being so globally abstract (e.g., "much growth occurred") that the reader couldn't know what happened, and so detailed that the reader couldn't interpret them.

VI. SERENDIPITOUS INTERPERSONAL LEARNING

Although we have been discussing the acquisition of interpersonal skills as a consciously pursued activity, the outcomes of learning are not always specifically stated or consciously sought. As relates to the purposiveness with which growth in interpersonal competency is pursued or noted formally through the contractual mode, the materials we have found fall into three groups:

a. Those in which growth is specifically addressed by the learning activities pursued and by the evaluative criteria designated.

b. Those in which the growth came as a serendipitous by-product of cognitive and/or participatory work in the contract, was perceived by the student and mentor, and formally noted in the final evaluation of the contract.

c. Those in which growth was neither explicitly sought nor mentioned in the contract or evaluation but which was perceptible to the mentor and elicited for this project through a case history.

Examples of sequences of learning in which the student and mentor agreed in advance to incorporate the acquisition of interpersonal competence are particularly rich material for this study. They have given us models suggesting kinds of learnings which can be appropriately and profitably pursued, how and by what criteria they can be evaluated, and what their acquisition can mean for the student. Many of these cases are discussed elsewhere in this paper. Examples of the second category, in which unforeseen or unplanned for learning took place and was duly noted in the evaluation, are also plentiful. A good example of this is the case of a student whose learning activities included a field placement with a Ugandan Asian Resettlement Camp in England.

Here he handled the travel, immigration, and resettlement needs for African-Asian families displaced by political events in Uganda. His career objective was to become a travel agent, and he had originally sought a business apprenticeship with a British travel agency. In response to an immediate and pressing national emergency he agreed to work at the Greenham Common Resettlement Camp. According to the mentor's evaluation, this experience led to profound interpersonal learning.

> . . . this section of his learning signalled a dramatic change in his approach to his career . . . . He was particularly effective with children, and he was used as a human contact-man with young people.
>
> When I visited [him] at the camp, I was immediately aware of how well known and how well liked he was. I feel certain that every Ugandan Asian under the age of 25 in that camp knew K., sought him out, and was known by name by him. He had become the social chairman for young people's activities at the camp, consulting with young men and women about job possibilities, referring them to the governmental and voluntary agencies that would provide them with help, involved in their lives and culture.
>
> The change in K. as a result of this experience was startling. He had come to London as a prospective business man, and he had developed into a budding social scientist. He had modified his business ethic with new humanistic concerns, and his learning about the delivery of social services, social service agencies in Britain, the culture of the Ugandan Asians, and the exigencies of forced migration had opened him to human concerns and social needs that had, before this, been obscured from K.'s vision.

Similarly, in another contract expressly addressed to self-exploration through analysis of fantasies and dreams, the mentor notes in the evaluation that along with the student's ability to evaluate his dreams and to make correlations between dreams and emotional and intellectual events,

> . . . there was excellent growth in self-confidence . . . he was able to undergo serious self-re-evaluation that has recently brought about a positive goal orientation, and specific career objectives that were lacking in our initial encounter.

The student himself wrote,

> I have been able to observe different aspects of consciousness, its polarities, and the way points of view and attitudes which we select and identify our awareness with affects us, and how the rigidity of our attitudes and thought limits our perspectives, and understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Clearly the interpersonal components of learning are developing along with the intrapersonal for this young man.

One more case illustrates another approach to learning that turned out to have incidental interpersonal components. S., whose general purpose was to study forestry, designed, with her mentor, a contract in which, among other things, she would pioneer a ten-mile section of trail in the Finger Lakes area, establishing ownership of the lands over which her route passed, seeking permission for the entrance of hikers, seeking assistance from volunteer groups in the actual construction of the trail and publicizing its existence. Because these activities involved her in a number of relationships with land owners, volunteer workers, town officials, and the like, the interpersonal components are retrospectively quite clear.

In the evaluation that followed the successful completion of this contract, the mentor attested to her ability

> to focus her energies and to work well with a variety of community volunteers, advisors, friendly consultants, landlords, and state officials in carrying out this difficult self-initiated task.

The mentor also mentioned that those who had been involved in the project had commented about S's growth "in understanding the complexities in dealing with the many interests that come into play in carrying out such a massive project."

In a subsequent contract S. worked to establish a small community center,

and again the evaluation notes that despite the conservative and somewhat hostile nature of the community, "she learned new, different and better ways to perceive the community's needs and to relate to the interests of the local community."

So far we've been discussing growth in interpersonal areas that has been part of the contract or the digest and evaluation--both documents of public record. However, as this study proceeded, we found another source of material relating to our thinking-feeling-acting triad--oral material elicited from mentors when they were asked to recollect cases in which there had been obvious and significant growth in interpersonal competences although that had not been envisioned in the writing of the contract nor mentioned in the formal evaluation. Indeed, many mentors felt strongly that such unanticipated or serendipitous growth was of a highly personal nature, and that to include description of it in the evaluation would be to jeopardize the student's right to privacy. A single case will serve to illustrate what is probably the merest tip of the iceberg--the great number of cases in which learning in the cognitive or skill domain had direct transference value to the student's ability to relate to others in a more positive fashion.

Case History - John P.

John P. is a crew-cut chemist in a small manufacturing plant. Middle-aged, middle income, middle America, he is a member of Kiwanis and the volunteer fire department and heads his son's troop of Cub Scouts. His life style is orderly to the point of rigidity, and he holds quiet but firm opinions on just about everything.

John's work at ESC had all been in technology and science until, that completed, he startled his mentor by choosing to do some work in creative writing.

On his first appointment with the mentor who was to work with him in writing, John announced that he read mainly detective stories, but that he wanted to write fiction and poetry because "you can get your message across better in

literature and nobody can argue with you." He also went on at great length and with passionate conviction that he "couldn't read anything written by a woman" (his new mentor was a woman), and that he could always sense when a woman had written something--it made him feel "funny."

The first short pieces John wrote were discouraging. Heavily didactic, they superimposed a ponderous load of ideas upon the slenderest of stories, the exposition burying the narration. The mentor suggested John read some Hemingway and Camus, two writers that "show" rather than "tell." She also suggested The Rhetoric of Fiction which appealed to John because of the high level of abstraction of Booth's critical theory which he equated with "scientific."

John abandoned his earlier desire to write a major opus immediately and began trying short exercises in which his idea or theme gradually came to be carried by action, imagery, and dialogue rather than by straight exposition. Moreover, he began to experiment with different narrative points of view, trying now the first person, then a disinterested observer, then the third person omniscient, etc.

Exhilerated by these experiments, he began asking to see the mentor for a few hours every week, and, sensing a period of important growth, she agreed. In these sessions John began to talk not only about the process of fiction, which more and more absorbed him, but also about his personal life. The mentor asked him one day what his wife thought about his writing, and he said, "Oh, not much. She doesn't think much." A long conversation ensued in which the mentor directly challenged that statement, and it ended with John agreeing to try to write a story from a female point of view, a thing he earlier had recoiled from doing.

During the four months that John worked on his creative writing contract, as he became more and more involved in the techniques of fiction and in ways of revealing character and motivation, his insistence on the controlling idea or theme diminished, and he began to speak of writing as an art form rather than as disguised propaganda. Moreover, after his successful experiment of writing from a woman's point of view, he seemed to become more relaxed about his own role. His stories of his home life now included his wife as well as his son, and he spoke about encouraging both his wife and his secretary to resume their education. In the stories themselves he was exploring subtle emotions and states of being that had earlier not interested him (or that he had felt uncomfortable with).

At the end of the contract, John was able to express his feelings of accomplishment and release through writing and said he hoped to do post-baccalaureate work in poetry. Since that time, the mentor has heard indirectly that the people at John's plant have commented that John has become friendlier, less uptight, and easier to work with.

Although a major intention of this report is to offer guidelines for the deliberate incorporation of interpersonal learning in college study, it must be

admitted that much important interpersonal learning is bound to occur unexpectedly. One cannot always anticipate what interpersonal resources one will need to cope with novel situations--in learning, working, or living--nor what interests and insights these events may awaken; not surprisingly, much interpersonal learning occurs in response to real, unplanned for challenges.

Then again, students may prefer to keep their interpersonal goals private. In wanting to study psychology, for example, students may be prompted in part by a desire to better understand themselves and others and to improve their interpersonal relationships, but they may not regard this as a formal educational goal or be yet ready to tackle it directly--a position that mentors tactfully respect.

But when the interpersonal goals are left implicit (as in contracts from "service" fields like education, health, and social work that may involve interpersonal activity without focusing on it); or when the mentor and student don't fully attend to the potential in a learning situation for developing interpersonal competence; in these instances, enhanced awareness of the prospects and means for deliberate interpersonal study would be appropriate.

VII. NEW DIRECTIONS

Having started out with a collection of interpersonal learning contracts developed by Empire State mentors and students, quite independently of any awareness of CAEL's interests in this area, it has been surprising and gratifying to discover how much about the interpersonal learning process was revealed through them. A range of student interests from role behaviors to social insights, and a variety of learning activities, mentoring procedures, and evaluative strategies came to light.

A major thrust of this report has been in the direction of making interpersonal learning more explicit. On the one hand, faculty were encouraged to become more sensitive to interpersonal learning opportunities and to recognize in students' statements of interests and in their educational goals the feasibility and desirability of devoting some study to interpersonal learning. A second recommendation for bringing interpersonal learning into more explicit educational focus was to proceed carefully, to take stock of initial level of functioning, identify needs and goals, observe changes, and finally, to assess the impact and value of the learning experience.

This section will focus on new directions for interpersonal learning in the sense of broadening the range of disciplines and areas of study where interpersonal learning can apply. At present, it seems that the great majority of interpersonal learning contracts are drawn from the human services; this is understandable and appropriate and ought to continue.[8] Other areas have been

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[8] A major effort at Empire State College to provide educational guidelines and resources for faculty and students in the community and human services is currently nearing completion (Miller, Mindell, and Wells, 1976).

mentioned in this report, such as personal relationships and social research. But here we will look at three areas that hold promise for studies in interpersonal learning and where glimmers of activity can already be spotted: management, communication, and social change.

Perhaps the best developed of the "new directions" lies in business, where the interpersonal emphasis is on mangement, supervision, and administration. (Selling would of course be another interpersonal focus drawn from the business field.) An indication of developments along this line can be seen in the following excerpts from the contract of a student who is working towards a degree in chemistry. His specific purposes for the contract in question are:

> To develop techniques and tools for the management of a chemical testing laboratory through the use of selected analytical methods and controls including:
>
> Personnel management and motivation
> Budgetary objectives and review
> Productivity potential

With respect to the first purpose, he contracted to carry out the following learning activities:

1. I will read the following texts and publications relative to personnel management and motivation:

   Effective Supervision, Dun and Bradstreet
   Management by Objectives, Odiorne
   Bristo, Clois E., "Do You Motivate Your Subordinates?"
   Culbreth, George, "Appraisals That Lead to Better Performance"
   DeVille, Jard, "Successful Leaders are Successful Motivators"
   Dexter, John, "Can You Level with Your Subordinates?"
   Frunzi, George L., and Joseph R. Dunn, "Counseling Subordinates: It's Up to You"
   Gellerman, Saul W., Motivation and Productivity, 1963
   Grote, Richard S., "Make the Most of Counseling Sessions"

Lovin, Bill C., and Emery Reber Casstevens, Coaching, Learning and Action, 1971
Masterson, Thomas R., and Thomas G. Mara, "Leadership Methods that Motivate"
Morano, Richard A., "Down with Performance Appraisals?"
Wedgwood, Hensleigh, "Meatballs and Motivation"
Weiss, Alan, "Delegation: The Key to Success is Preparation"

2. I will write a paper (15-20 pages) which will reflect my thoughts as to how I may most effectively manage and motivate the personnel of a testing laboratory operation. I will consider in part the following personnel management and control techniques and tools:

    Management by objectives
    Job requirements vs. job specifications
    Personnel skills inventory

Although the experiential learning component is only implied here, it should be possible, in a contract such as this, to build in direct attempts to enact management principles.

The following excerpt is from the evaluation of a contract in business management. As in the example just cited, there is no actual performance involved, but the focus of the contract is clearly interpersonal.

> In her study of Effective Supervision, the student's written responses to the working papers and tests as well as the results of her final examination were accurate, complete and without exception demonstrated an excellent comprehension of the supervisor's broad range of responsibilities relative to his management, his workers, and himself. She has an excellent understanding of the value of realistic interpersonal relationships in the implementation of a supervisor's responsibilities in the areas of discipline, motivation, labor relations, evaluation, and compensation.
>
> Her critical analysis (of three major corporations) was well documented and in a more than satisfactory manner detailed how the current performance of these three corporations reflected on the skills of management.

Industrial Psychology, with its concern for such issues as motivation and group behavior, is closely allied to business management and has as well good prospects for interpersonal study.

The study of communication offers many possibilities for furthering interpersonal competence. The development of good communication skills--with emphasis on clarity in thought, speech, and writing--is itself a fundamental requisite of education and seems basic to interpersonal interaction as well. Indeed, communication--verbal and nonverbal, spoken and written--is the very medium of interpersonal interaction. Much has been written about how language creates social reality, and certainly the interpersonal theories of personality stress the importance of communication (e.g., Sullivan, 1953; Bateson, 1972). The abilities to send and receive messages with minimal distortion seem basic; other skills, such as being able to persuade or to speak in public would be more specialized.

Studies of communication lend themselves easily to interdisiplinary work, spanning fields like English and Psychology; this may be seen in the following bibliography and topics taken from the first contract of a student whose area of concentration was interpersonal communications:

> Beardsley, M., Logic and Effective Argument
> Huff, D., How to Lie with Statistics
> Kytle, R., Clear Thinking for Composition
> Hayakawa, S., Language in Thought and Action
> Gibson, W., Tough, Sweet and Stuffy
> Harris, T., I'm OK, You're OK
>
> I will study the formal elements of deductive logic and common tests for validity; identify fallacies in inductive reasoning; become sensitive to rational and irrational semantic messages; become aware of common blocks that prevent clear thinking and develop techniques for overcoming them.

A working knowledge of the uses and functions of language and human expressiveness, a worthy goal in its own right, may also be pursued within specific interpersonal contexts, professional and personal, and can thus be approached as a general or applied ability.

Interpersonal abilities are social by definition; they have to do with people affecting and influencing one another. The benefits of interpersonal competence accrue not only to the "possessor" but also to the others with whom that person comes in contact and the interpersonal environments that the competent person helps improve and brighten.

Thinking on a somewhat broader scale now, it has certainly been an overriding goal of the social sciences to come to grips with questions concerning the types of social systems and interpersonal environments that could help solve enduring human interpersonal and intergroup conflicts and mitigate the catastrophic effects of aggression. From this perspective, the ability to exert a beneficial influence on social systems must surely be counted among the interpersonal competences. Sociologists, political scientists, and community psychologists, among others, who have thought about what kinds of environments would bring out the best in people, might begin now to think more concretely about how their students could develop skills for analyzing and even intervening in social systems.

Of the three "new directions" presented here, this one, dealing with social change, seems currently the least developed. That there is some student interest in this direction can be glimpsed in the following quote from the General Purposes (statement of overall educational plans or aspirations which heads all learning contracts) of a student in Psychology:

> Mr. G. believes the major role of the psychologist is now moving from individual and group psychology towards actual community work. Shaping this idea is a long time interest in community work and life system methodologies. He has done a lot of informal reading and now as a student, he wishes to "arc the gaps" in his knowledge and understanding by bringing these ideas together in an experimentally demonstrable scheme.

As part of contract work on art and nonverbal experience, this student, himself a musician, hopes to discover "the development of communal interpersonal experience through music."

Students who are interested in building communities, communes, or utopias, or more modestly, in reforming or improving existing organizations, can begin to learn about and acquire the interpersonal characteristics that can bring about and maintain healthy social environments.

Although we have been looking for directions in which interpersonal learning could expand, this does not imply a policy of manifest destiny, in which interpersonal study would spread across the entire undergraduate curriculum. Certainly not all faculty will feel that they have the expertise to work with students in this area, and just as one would not expect a professor of English to be competent in biology, so one would not expect faculty to step outside their professional boundaries to assist students in interpersonal learning.

Yet there seem to be some among the faculty who suspect that they could be doing more with students in the interpersonal learning area. They might begin by considering how their fields apply in real life situations. If not in the content of the discipline, perhaps the possibilities lie in its professional application--itself no mean contributor to success. (The relation of interpersonal competence to professional success is thoroughly explored in Argyris and

and Schön, 1974.) Moreover, in the course of their professional development as mentors, many are likely to have acquired not only some interpersonal proficiency themselves, but also some ability to guide students in interpersonal learning.

At this time, it appears that the range of disciplines where interpersonal studies would be appropriate can extend beyond the human services and related fields (where the tradition is already well-established), and find a home in the humanities, the social sciences, and business and professional studies.

[Editor's Note. Readers interested in interpersonal skills as college-level competences should be aware of two other CAEL publications: Teaching and Assessing Interpersonal Competence--A CAEL Handbook and Learning and Assessing Interpersonal Competence--A CAEL Student Guide. Both were written by Paul Breen, Thomas F. Donlon, and Urban Whitaker and will be published early in 1977 by CAEL, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.]

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APPENDIX A

Empire State College Learning Contract

STUDENT'S NAME (TYPE LAST NAME FIRST) ADDRESS TELEPHONE: HOME WORK	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER		CONTRACT #
	CONTRACT BEGINS ON	CONTRACT ENDS ON	FINAL CONTRACT?
	MONTHS OF CREDIT:		FULL-TIME ☐ HALF-TIME ☐
MENTOR'S NAME (TYPE LAST NAME FIRST)	CHECK TYPE EXTERNAL RESOURCE USED		
	ADJUNCT FACULTY ☐	COURSE ELSEWHERE ☐	FIELD STUDY ☐
	INTERNSHIP ☐	ISP ☐	MODULES ☐
LEARNING CENTER:	OVERSEAS ☐	RESIDENCY ☐	TV COURSE ☐
	TUTOR ☐	OTHER ☐	

Give detailed description of: (a) STUDENT'S GENERAL PURPOSES, plans, or aspirations; (b) SPECIFIC PURPOSES of this Contract; (c) LEARNING ACTIVITIES to be undertaken and schedule by which they will be pursued and (d) methods and criteria for EVALUATION. Use the underlined as headings for the four sections of the Contract, and attach additional pages as necessary.

(Additional pages are added as needed.)

SIGNATURES	DATE
STUDENT	
MENTOR	
ASSOC. DEAN	

APPENDIX B

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE **SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK 12866**

CONTRACT DIGEST AND EVALUATION

Student _____ S.S.# _____ Contract # _____ Status _____

Mentor _____ L.C./Unit _____ Date of Contract _____ to _____

Months of Credit Earned _____

The following headings appear on each D&E:

I. Purpose of Contract and Specific Topics

II. Evaluative Criteria and Methods

III. Mentor Evaluation

(additional pages are added as needed.)

SIGNATURES:

Student _____ Date _____ Dean _____

Mentor _____ Date _____ Date _____